

584 make their appearance, and having studied the chosen cavalier join him in the
 836 dance, holding him by the shoulder or around his body (Fig. 2). Either during or
 [535] immediately after the dance the girl draws away her elected partner, taking him
 as a rule to the house of her parents.

302 The introduction to a pre-marital sexual relation can naturally take place in
 832 some other manner. It often happens that a young man desiring a sweetheart
 paints a particular pattern on his face, a large red oval or circle containing small
 white spots on both cheeks. Everybody then knows that he is seeking a girl, and
 he is called *kyutihli*. The day after, perhaps even the same day, a girl will be seen
 painted with the same pattern. She is called *samaklanit*, because by her painting
 she indicates that she accepts him. This method also shows that it is the girl who
 836 makes the choice. He makes himself available both at the nightly dance and by
 painting himself, and she is free to accept him or to refrain from so doing. I was
 [558] assured many times that a young man so selected has no chance of excusing him-
 [548] self; he would lose face if he attempted to do so, and would call down upon him-
 [182] self the anger of the girl's family. A young man who is not chosen by a girl despite
 his wish can in the meantime console himself with one of the village prostitutes,
 who appear to have precisely this function, as extra-marital infidelity with a
 prostitute is regarded as valid unfaithfulness.

301 It has already been mentioned that young men and women seeking love can
 832 often be recognized by the painting of their faces and by a general urge to adorn
 themselves. Also restricted to this period are a special broad armlet made of black
 and white beads, and—particularly for the girls—an ordinary white string of
 beads from which depend red woollen cords with bead tassels that hang down the
 neck (Fig. 1). Young men who seek or have just found a sweetheart, traditionally
 832 evince great musicality, and are practically the only ones who play the Jew's harp
 [533] and a primitive musical bow. The music gives expression to longing and un-
 [534] requited love. Young couples have a special form of caress, pressing the cheek
 [304] of their partners with the points of their nails. This leaves behind small wounds
 visible for a week or more, and is proof of great infatuation.

836 When a girl has found a sweetheart no secret is made of the fact; at all events
 all the young people in the village will be aware of the various short-lived unions
 that have begun. But when she brings her lover home at night to her parents'
 house they nevertheless evince a form of discretion. The parents pretend to be
 asleep whilst the young ones creep in; but the father, as though by chance, may
 cause the fire to blaze up so that he can see whom the girl has chosen. He then lies
 down to rest. It is often said of a young couple who in this way commence inti-
 583 mate relations that "they have begun to be married". This means that they have
 836 commenced a kind of trial marriage the result of which is far from certain. The
 [581] girl has primarily chosen her sweetheart on the basis of an undefined mixture of
 [582] sexual attraction and other propensities, whereas the girl's parents wish to limit
 the choice to those economically acceptable. Early the next morning the new

583 this will not influence her choice and that of her parents. An abortion will be
 581 produced artificially should the man prove to be unacceptable. Should the girl
 847 prove to be pregnant at a time when she has started a new, more stable, relation,
 the new young man will demand that she aborts.

585 Thus the consummation of the marriage, the creation of a family, is, for the
 591 Mataco, identical with the commencement of a completely valid marriage. As
 a rule the family moves shortly after the birth to its own hut, though still near
 [178] the girl's parents. Village matrilocality is permanent, and until about 40 years
 [342] ago, when communal houses were still the most common, the sharing of a hut
 with the wife's family for a whole lifetime, was the rule.

593 Already in connexion with her initiation each girl is given certain advice by
 [881] her mother concerning the proper behaviour as a married person. The mother
 [867] will tell her, for example, that she must treat her coming in-laws as though they
 [606] were her own parents and that she must always be generous when it is a matter
 of sharing food with them. She will also counsel the girl to show respect to her
 future husband, fetching fuel, for example, when he is away fishing, and ensuring
 that there is plenty of water for him when he returns from hunting. Willingness to
 cooperate and mutual respect are very typical of the relations between man and
 wife. The man's position in marriage is formally the same. He must regard his
 [606] wife's parents as his own, must be generous to them, though in fact they do not
 treat him with the same indulgence they would show a son. In any conflict that
 may arise they side with the daughter against the husband. Should he not be
 sufficiently industrious he will be sent out to fish or hunt, and if unsuccessful he
 will be reproached, something that no Mataco would do to a son. If a man quarrels
 with his mother-in-law he is chased away. His happiness depends to a high degree
 upon an equable temperament and ability to obtain food. But as his wife will
 [476] always share his bag with relations and friends, and because matrilocality prevails,
 the wife's family will always obtain the lion's share of what he brings back.

606 The position of a son-in-law as a stranger in another band also raises difficulties
 609 for him. In case of dispute his wife's family or other local people will be able to
 say: "We don't know him and don't trust him". Perhaps he has no kin in the
 village to vouch for him and give him assistance. The position of a son-in-law can
 thus be compared to that of a stranger in a big city, irresponsible because he is
 unknown, and overlooked for that reason.

593 The mutual relations of married couples are naturally stamped by matrilo-
 [554] cality and the woman's very considerable occupational effort, which together give
 the wife a good social position in relation to her husband. In the meantime it is
 more through the wife's family that this status is manifested. As between the
 sexes the husband still dominates. As a rule it is the husband who has the say,
 but it is often the woman who decides what is to be said. The latent tension
 [182] between family and sex results in a curiously unintegrated behaviour. By day a
 man and wife behave almost like strangers to each other. They are extremely terse



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Fig. 3.—Normally separated during the day because of different occupations, the single family joins during the night in gossip and sleep. In winter the Mataco sleep indoor on platform beds, in summer normally in the open on furs and with a log as a pillow. Flash-phot. Fock.

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in their conversation and show no sign of affection. A man going out to hunt merely says: "I am off and shall return in 3-4 days". She says at most "Very good", and when he comes back there will be no form of greeting or conversation. Married couples who break this rule and evince great devotion or jealousy are not expected to remain together for any length of time, as in this way they will bind themselves to each other. This will stop them attending to their respective occupations which often take them in different directions. Devotion between man and wife, undoubtedly often present, belongs to the night only and is closely connected with the sexual life. It is as though the recollection of the first trial marriage has delineated a pattern to be followed; first the intimate, nocturnal meeting at the dancing-place and in the girl's home; then the sudden awakening to the demands of the father-in-law. It is a general feature with both children and adults that they are far more confident and daring by night than by day.

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The Mataco are monogamous. There are very few examples of men with two or three wives, and then it was always a matter of chiefs. The polygyny of chiefs is probably an ancient custom, as it is sanctioned in the account about the first appearance of woman. Incidentally, monogamy is strictly enforced, and no form of extra-marital sexual relations is socially sanctioned. In case of infidelity

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Laziness and incompetence are other things that often lead to divorce. If it is the woman who justly is accused of these faults she can be forced out of the house and her parents will take no counter steps. If in such circumstances there are small children in the marriage, she may be allowed to take them, but if the husband continues to send them small gifts and food he retains the right to them and gets them back at an age of 5-6, as they belong to his band. If, on the other hand, he fails to show them any attention, he loses them and may not even be allowed to play with them. Should it be the man who is lazy, his wife makes no mention of it but her parents become angry with him. One day when the man is out seeking food, the parents exhort their daughter to hide herself with some family. When the husband returns home he discovers what is going on without his in-laws saying anything to him. He also says nothing, but begins to collect his things together. He will not leave the house until nightfall, unseen, because he is ashamed, and then return to his family. It is said that this custom was far more widespread a generation ago than it is now. Several women, with a smile, expressed their relief at this as "they would never manage to have any fun out of a man before he was kicked out by his in-laws, for nowadays all men are lazy".

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The third—and last—cause of divorce socially recognized is: childless marriages. It is always the woman who is considered to be sterile, and consequently the man who takes the initiative for divorce. However, in such cases it is he who leaves the house, presumably because he has already sought contact with a possible new wife. His sister may help him to get into touch with one of her friends and let them meet secretly in the forest to discover whether they like each other. The man thus leaves the house as he falls under the rule governing unfaithful husband, and not because his wife is sterile.

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Whatever the reason for a Mataco divorce, it is always a heavy blow, both morally and economically, for the spouse that is left. The economic loss can only be made good by re-marriage, and this nearly always takes place. Unmarried persons are reduced to living partly on the bounty of the family as occupations are so sharply divided according to sex.

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A person who feels himself rejected or a victim of unhappy love sometimes commits suicide, which with the Mataco appears to occur particularly in this connexion and is always done in the same manner. The unfortunate one goes alone into the forest and collects the very poisonous fruit of the *sacha sandia* (*Caparis salicifolia*), which the Indian then cooks lightly and eats. After a few hours when no remedy is possible, the Indian returns home and lies down to sleep. Death comes very shortly. In cases of suicide the spouse of the dead person will always be pointed to as the one responsible. In consequence, the family of the dead person will in many cases start a campaign against that of the spouse to obtain blood vengeance or, more probably, to secure economic compensation.

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According to Mataco unwritten law infidelity is severely punished by the loss of home and children. This should occasion no surprise, for adultery, on account

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Mataco Marriage

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of band exogamy, is the main reason for blood feuds and inter-band warfare. The marriage system thus obtains a far-reaching political influence. Its effectiveness in the case of the Mataco seems far from sufficient, for one thing because no form of extra-marital valve exists. The only thing in this respect is the trial marriage, which is interesting because it clearly discloses the factors that are considered most important in connexion with the creation of a family: first the girl's choice according to inclination and sexual standards, then the sorting done by the couple and the parents on the basis of economic and social position, and, finally, the demand that the union shall be fruitful. Until these three demands are complied with a marriage is not fully recognized by society; should the woman remain childless, it is an acceptable reason for the man to be divorced from her.

Presumably on account of the undefined character of the contract of marriage, no specific wedding ceremony takes place with the Mataco. Family and band solidarity is regarded as so important that the ban on incest and its conventional extension, band exogamy, are considered as measures to counter internal dissension and the forming of cliques. Based on instincts, marriage as an institution can only partially be analysed by an ethnographer, but it seems fair to say that the function of the Mataco marriage, both biologically and culturally, is the creation and maintenance of the family, the greatest possible consideration being shown to the wish of the two parties to preserve the solidarity of the respective bands without thereby upsetting mutual peace. With the Mataco, therefore, marriage, mankind's oldest contract, is not so much a matter of the individual as a family affair.

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